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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 003002

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G, G/TIP, INL, DRL, PRM, NEA/RA AND NEA/ARPI  
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SUBJECT: UAE CAMEL JOCKEY LAW ON THE BOOKS

1. (U) UAE President Khalifa issued a federal law July 5 that prohibits persons below 18 years of age from taking part in camel races, and subjects traffickers to jail sentences and/or fines. The new law received prominent coverage in both the Arabic and English press, which touted it as the first law of its kind in the region. The Mission has scheduled meetings with UAEG, NGO, and source country embassies and consulates for G/TIP Reports Officer Feleke Assefa, who will be in Abu Dhabi and Dubai July 6-14 assessing the UAE's progress in achieving the six steps in the Department's 60-day action plan.

2. (U) The UAE's new law contains four articles, the unofficial translation of which follows:

Article 1: All procedures that have been used to bring children under age 18 of either sex into the UAE to work in the camel racing industry will be cancelled.

Article 2: Persons violating the law will be subject to a prison term of up to three years and/or a fine not less than 50,000 Dirhams (\$13,500). The penalties will be doubled for repeat offenders. (Note: Offenders could be subject to tougher penalties if such punishment is incorporated in any other law.)

Article 3: The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is empowered to implement the law in coordination with other concerned authorities.

Article 4: The law will be published in the UAEG Official Gazette and enforced as of the date of its publication.

3. (SBU) In a meeting with the Consul General in Dubai the morning of July 6, Dubai Immigration head Brigadier Saeed bin Beleilah offered his congratulations at the fact that the long-awaited law had finally been issued. In the presence of the CG, he then phoned one of his immigration enforcement agents and instructed him to turn his attention to camel farms in the emirate of Dubai, and to "bring in" any underage workers he found there, "whether jockeys, or the boys who care for and feed the camels." Asked what Dubai Immigration would do with any underage workers found, Bin Beleilah said they would be taken to the private shelter run by Sharla Mussabah, which now received funding from the government of Dubai. He cautioned, however, that there was no guarantee that any jockey would be found ) many had already been moved to other emirates, a trend that would likely increase now that the decree criminalizing such labor had been issued.

4. (U) The law was issued in line with federal legislation, including Law No. 1 of 1972 related to ministries' specializations, ministers' authorities and amended laws; Law No. 6 of 1973 on the entry and residence of foreign nationals and its amendments; Law No. 8 of 1980 related to the organization of labor relations and its amendments; Law No. 3 of 1987 on the issue of the penal code; and Law No. 35 of 1992 on the issue of punitive procedures laws.

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